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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

CLASSIFICATION — DISSEMINATION CONTROLS

C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L NO FOREIGN DISSEM/NO DISSEM ABROAD/BACKGROUND USE ONLY/CONTROLLED DISSEM

COUNTRY	SOUTH VIETNAM	REPORT NO.	TDCS DB-3/657,133
SUBJECT	SITUATION APPRAISAL AS OF 5 OCTOBER 1963	DATE DISTR.	8 OCTOBER 1963
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DATE OF INFO.		REFERENCES	IN 33775
PLACE & DATE ACQ.	VIETNAM, SAIGON (5 OCTOBER 1963)		
APPRAISAL	COMMENTARY	FIELD REPORT NO.	

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION. SOURCE GRADINGS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

SOURCE STAFF OFFICERS OF THIS ORGANIZATION.

1. THIS IS A FIELD APPRAISAL OF THE CURRENT SITUATION. IT IS NOT AN OFFICIAL JUDGEMENT BY THIS AGENCY OR ANY COMPONENT. IT REPRESENTS THE OBSERVATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS OF STAFF OFFICERS BASED ON INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THEM AT THE TIME OF ITS PREPARATION. PREPARED FOR INTERNAL USE AS A GUIDE TO THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT, THIS COMMENTARY IS DISSEMINATED IN THE BELIEF THAT IT MAY BE USEFUL TO OTHER AGENCIES IN ASSESSING THE SITUATION FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES.

2. THE MOST STRIKING FEATURE OF THE INTELLIGENCE REPORTS FOR THE WEEK OF 29 SEPTEMBER-5 OCTOBER 1963 HAS BEEN A GREATER DEPTH OF REPORTING ON COUP PLOTTING, PROVIDING INFORMATION IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL AS TO THE PERSONALITIES INVOLVED AND THEIR ALLOTTED ROLES. STILL LACKING, HOWEVER, IS SOLID INFORMATION AS TO THE COHESIVENESS OF VARIOUS GROUPS REPORTED READY TO LAUNCH A COUP AND TO

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GROUP 1 Excluded from automatic downgrading and declassification

STATE/INR	DIA	ARMY/ACSI	NAVY	AIR	JCS	SECDEF	NSA	NIC	XXX	XXX	OCI	ONE	OCR	XXX	ORR	XX
STATE/DIR																

TELEGRAM INFORMATION REPORT TELEGRAM

THE EXTENT TO WHICH THEY ENJOY FIRM LEADERSHIP AT THE TOP OF THE ICEBERG OF WHICH WE ARE STILL GETTING ONLY TANGENTIAL GLIMPSES.

3. THE GENERALS MEANWHILE ARE NOW PRESSING PRESIDENT NGO DINH DIEM FOR A REPLY TO THE DEMANDS MADE SEVERAL WEEKS AGO DURING THE HEIGHT OF THE MARTIAL LAW PHASE. AS DESCRIBED BY GENERAL TRAN VAN DON, THE LIST OF DEMANDS ARE QUITE EXTENSIVE, INCLUDING THE ASSIGNMENT OF MILITARY MEN TO THE POSTS OF MINISTERS OF DEFENSE, INTERIOR, CIVIC ACTION AND EDUCATION. THEY ALSO ASKED FOR CONTROL OF THE SAIGON/CHOLON POLICE AND THE PLACEMENT OF THE CAPITAL REGION UNDER A PERMANENT MILITARY GOVERNORSHIP. DON SAYS THAT HE AND HIS FELLOW GENERAL OFFICERS DO NOT EXPECT DIEM TO ACCEDE TO THIS PACKAGE OF PROPOSALS, ACCEPTANCE OF WHICH WOULD INDEED AMOUNT TO A VIRTUAL SURRENDER ON THE PART OF DIEM AND NGO DINH NHU. THE LATTER WILL PROBABLY GO PART WAY, HOWEVER, IN MEETING THE DESIRES OF THE MILITARY IN AN EFFORT TO DETER THE LATTER FROM ATTEMPTING AN EARLY COUP. THEIR TACTIC IS LIKELY TO BE ONE OF SEEKING TO ENMESH THE GENERALS IN TIME-CONSUMING NEGOTIATIONS RELATED TO THE PROSPECTIVE REVAMPING OF THE GOVERNMENT WITH A VIEW TOWARD GAINING TIME IN WHICH TO MONITOR AND BREAK UP ANY COUP COMBINATION WHICH MAY BE DEVELOPING. THE OUTCOME OF MANEUVERING BETWEEN DIEM AND NHU AND THE MILITARY DURING THE COMING FEW WEEKS, OR POSSIBLY EVEN DAYS, IS LIKELY TO BE OF DECISIVE IMPORTANCE TO FUTURE COURSE OF EVENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM.

4. DESPITE THE IMPRESSION OF THE RETURN TO NORMALITY THAT IS BEING FOSTERED BY THE REGIME, THE ATMOSPHERE IN SAIGON CONTINUES TO BE PERVADED TO A CONSIDERABLE DEGREE BY FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY. ARRESTS REPORTEDLY ARE CONTINUING, AS WELL AS

SEARCHES OF PRIVATE HOMES BY THE SECURITY FORCES.

5. THERE ARE SCATTERED INDICATIONS THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM (GVN) IS PLANNING TO SPRING SOME SURPRISES ON THE 26 OCTOBER NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS. NHU, FOR EXAMPLE, IS REPORTED TO HAVE TOLD THE GENERALS THAT IN A FEW WEEKS HE WOULD UNDERTAKE AN UNSPECIFIED ACTION OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL NATURE WHICH NEITHER "THE WEALTHY NOR THE AMERICANS WOULD LIKE." WE ALSO HAVE A REPORT THAT SWEEPING CHANGES IN THE POLICE AND CIVIL INTELLIGENCE COMPLEX WILL OCCUR. MORE FRIVOLOUS BUT PERHAPS SUGGESTIVE OF THE DESIRE BY THE REGIME TO EASE THE CURRENT ATMOSPHERE IN SAIGON ARE THE RUMORS THAT THE BAN ON DANCING WILL BE LIFTED. NATIONAL DAY WOULD BE THE LOGICAL TIME FOR DIEM TO ANNOUNCE REVAMPING OF HIS GOVERNMENT, PROVIDED THIS DELICATE OPERATION CAN BE COMPLETED IN TIME.

6. A STRIKING THING ABOUT THE ELECTIONS WAS THE FACT THAT THEY WENT OFF VIRTUALLY WITHOUT INCIDENT, EITHER IN SAIGON OR IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. THERE HAD BEEN SEVERAL INDICATIONS THAT THE VIET CONG (VC) INTENDED DISRUPTION AS A COMPANION TACTIC TO THEIR PROPAGANDA CALL FOR THE BOYCOTT OF THE ELECTIONS. NEITHER DURING THE ELECTIONS, NOR DURING THE PRECEDING BUDDHIST CRISIS, DID THE COMMUNISTS SEEM ABLE TO CAPITALIZE ON THEIR IMMEDIATE OPPORTUNITIES. ESPECIALLY LACKING WAS THE EXERCISE OF THEIR MUCH VAUNTED CAPABILITIES FOR TERRORISM, RAISING SOME QUESTION IN OUR MINDS AS TO WHETHER VC ABILITY TO USE TERRORISM IN CITIES/WAS AS GREAT AS WE HAD BEEN LED TO BELIEVE. IT WAS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF THE VC BOYCOTT APPEAL SINCE THE GVN IN MANY AREAS MORE OR LESS FORCED THE ELECTORATE TO VOTE AND IN AREAS WHERE ITS CONTROL WAS NOT THAT STRONG, THE REGIME ALMOST CERTAINLY FALSIFIED THE PERCENTAGES OF THE VOTE.

7. ONE INDICATION OF THE REGIME'S INCREASED CONFIDENCE THAT IT HAS THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL IS THE FACT THAT COLONEL TUNG HAS RELEASED TWO COMPANIES OF SPECIAL FORCES TROOPS FOR OPERATIONS AGAINST THE VC.

8. ALTHOUGH MOMENTARILY QUIESCENT BECAUSE OF THE HEAVY GVN SECURITY CONTROLS, THE STUDENTS CONTINUE THEIR ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND ARE DEVELOPING PLANS FOR FURTHER ACTION AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. THERE APPEARS TO BE CONSIDERABLE DIVISION OF OPINION AMONG THE VARIOUS STUDENT GROUPS, SOME OF WHICH EXISTED PRIOR TO THE BUDDHIST CRISIS AND SOME HAVE SINCE EMERGED. REPORTING RECEIVED TO DATE WOULD INDICATE THAT THE VC HAVE NOT YET MADE SIGNIFICANT INROADS INTO THE STUDENT MOVEMENT, ALTHOUGH THIS IS OF COURSE AN INCREASING POSSIBILITY IF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE STUDENTS AND THE GVN LONG REMAIN IN THEIR PRESENT UNSATISFACTORY STATE. IN PARTICULAR, WE HAVE LITTLE EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE THESIS THAT THE STUDENTS ARE FLEEING TO THE COUNTRYSIDE TO JOIN THE VC ALTHOUGH SOME REPORTEDLY DID LEAVE SAIGON AND HUE TO AVOID ARREST DURING THE PERIOD OF THE GOVERNMENT CRACKDOWN.

9. A REPORT FROM A VIETNAMESE TRADE UNION OFFICIAL PROVIDES ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE NHU-MANELI MEETING IN EARLY SEPTEMBER AND ON THE GENERAL SUBJECT OF POSSIBLE GVN-DRV RAPPROCHEMENT. ACCORDING TO INFORMATION RECEIVED BY THE SOURCE FROM A FRENCH EMBASSY OFFICER, HO CHI MINH HAD AT ONE TIME INDICATED TO A FORMER FRENCH REPRESENTATIVE IN NORTH VIETNAM HIS DISCOURAGEMENT OVER CASUALTIES SUSTAINED IN THE WAR IN THE SOUTH, HIS DISTASTE FOR THE CHINESE PRESENCE IN THE DRV, AND HIS RESTIVENESS OVER SOVIET "INTERFERENCE" OF AN UNSPECIFIED NATURE. LALOUETTE WAS REPORTED TO HAVE PASSED THIS ON TO NHU WHO,

ACCORDING TO THE FRENCH, LEAKED IT TO JOSEPH ALSOP, THUS BETRAYING THE CONFIDENTIAL FRENCH CONVERSATION WITH HO. THE FRENCH ALLEGEDLY FEEL THIS PUT LALOUETTE IN AN UNTENABLE POSITION; HENCE, HIS FAILURE TO RETURN TO SAIGON. IT IS DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT THE FRENCH REALLY CONSIDER NHU'S "INDISCRETION" AS SERIOUS, AS THEY LET ON. SOURCE CLAIMS, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT MANELI TOLD NHU PRRCTICALLY THE SAME STORY ABOUT HO'S PREOCCUPATIONS.

10. FIELD DISSEM. STATE (AMBASSADOR, DCM), USMACV (HARKINS), CINCPAC, PACFLT, PACAF, ARPAC.

END OF MESSAGE